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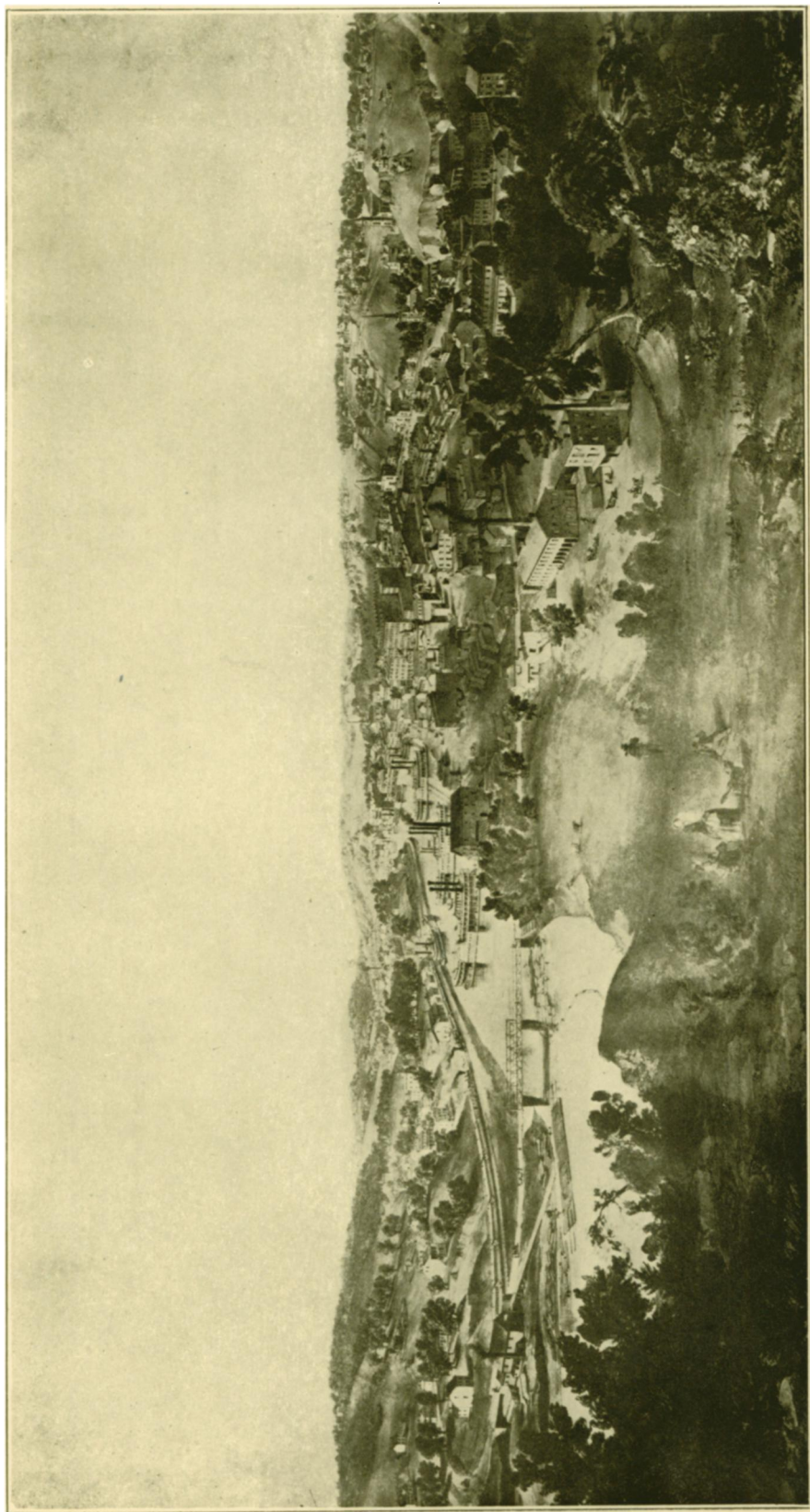
HISTORICAL FRAGMENTS

GENERAL GRANT AND EARLY GALENA¹

I was born near Philadelphia, in 1830, a descendant of the Welsh who settled in that region more than two hundred years ago. In 1846 I accompanied my parents, sister, and three brothers to the territory of Wisconsin, settling near Platteville. My good parents have long since been gathered to their fathers, but their five children, who came west with them, survive, a remarkable record. I question whether this can be equalled by any other Wisconsin family. My sister, Mrs. Sarah Westrop of Madison, is the eldest and past ninety; I am in my eighty-ninth year; brother T. Elwood Evans of Cumberland, Iowa, is eighty-seven; brother George T. Evans of Belmont, Wisconsin, is eighty-five; while the youngest, Henry Clay Evans of Chattanooga, Tennessee, is seventy-six. The last-named went south after seeing service in the Civil War and has since made a national reputation as congressman, commissioner of pensions, and manufacturer. We all keep in touch with one another, and though H. C. is farthest away, he writes me regularly no matter whether he may be in Europe or America. We are proud of one another and think we have a right to be.

When I arrived in southwestern Wisconsin, Galena was the great trading and shipping center of this section. It had large wholesale and retail establishments, and its now deserted levee was then crowded with large steamboats, which brought merchandise and passengers from St. Louis and other down-river towns and carried back lead and other products of early Wisconsin. Indeed in 1836 to 1846, when Chicago was a mud flat covered with flimsy wooden buildings, Galena was a substantial place with large stone and brick warehouses and elegant stone churches, a number of which are still in service, although constructed more than eighty years ago. But the railroads and new towns springing up caused the decline of Galena which, in 1856,

¹ This article, the recollections of Mr. J. H. Evans of Platteville, was written out by J. H. A. Lacher of Waukesha, after an interview with Mr. Evans in February, 1919.



GALENA IN 1856

From a photograph in the Wisconsin Historical Library

boasted fifteen thousand people, three times the present population. Platteville according to the last school census has now passed her ancient metropolis.

Still I like to think of the past glories of Galena, for when I was engaged in business at Platteville sixty years ago I had close business relations with its leading merchants. And there were some big men there in those times. One of the most famous Americans the country has ever produced used to call on me just before the Civil War. I well remember my first introduction to him. Together with another county official I had been at Madison fruitlessly lobbying for the election to the United States Senate of C. C. Washburn; while returning by team to Lancaster we were accosted at midnight by two men in a buggy, who inquired the way. My companion recognized the voice of the speaker as that of Brown, a Galena salesman, who then introduced us in the dark to his partner, Captain U. S. Grant. It was too dark to distinguish his features, but some time afterward Mr. L. S. Felt, one of the leading merchants of Galena, brought Grant into my store at Platteville and again introduced me to him. I offered them a cigar, but Grant did not smoke his, simply chewing it and throwing it away. I met Captain Grant frequently thereafter, for he sold leather and bought hides in our section for his father's branch tannery at Galena.

Although Grant was paid but a small salary by the firm of Grant and Perkins, and lived in a modest brick house for which he paid \$15 a month rent, he had strong friends among the leading men of Galena, who evidently recognized the latent worth in the unassuming, quiet captain. Foremost among these were Congressman E. B. Washburne; A. L. Chetlain, dealer in queensware; L. S. Felt, dry goods merchant; B. H. Campbell, grocer; J. Russell Jones, a partner of Campbell; John A. Rawlins, a young lawyer; W. R. Rowley, clerk of court; John E. Smith, jeweler; J. A. Maltby, gunsmith, and Colonel Porter, a West Point man, then superintending the erection of the postoffice at Galena. These were Grant's intimate friends, whom he met almost daily when in town; and he made nearly all of them officers in the army or in civil life. John Aaron Rawlins, who at the outbreak of the war made a great Union address at Galena at which Grant presided, was later his chief of staff, when the bonds of friendship were still more closely cemented. He was deserving of all the

honors showered upon him, including a membership in Grant's cabinet as secretary of war. Chetlain became a major general. Felt, one of Grant's most intimate friends, was offered the position of collector of the port of New York, but declined the honor. Campbell was appointed United States marshal of Illinois; while Jones was made minister to Belgium. Rowley and Maltby became brigadier generals; as did John E. Smith, who made a pretty good one too. Porter, who was partly of Oneida Indian blood, served on General Grant's staff and he surely was a good one. Washburne, who represented the Galena district in Congress from 1852 to 1869, was for a short time secretary of state under Grant, but later distinguished himself as minister to France.

Grant was loyal to his friends even though these did not always measure up to the positions conferred upon them. Withal, his Galena chums were a credit to him, as history testifies. Washburne and Rawlins ranked well above the average among the men in public life in those stirring days.

Shortly after the battle of Corinth I saw General Grant coming out of a photograph gallery at Memphis, Tennessee; I immediately entered and ordered a copy of the picture just taken. I have treasured this picture all these years, but now I turn it over to the Historical Society. I met Grant at Vicksburg, Memphis, and at other points during the Civil War, but the last time I saw him was right here in Platteville, in 1868. He surely created a bigger sensation than when he used to come to our little city as a traveling salesman less than ten years before. Some who had known him as a modest, reserved man never could believe in his greatness, notwithstanding his achievements. But I knew and admired him and I am proud of the Mississippi Valley which produced him and most of the great leaders of the Civil War.

I like to think of old Platteville and the stirring times before and during the Civil War. I saw many notable men of those early days at Major Rountree's home. His wife was a cousin of my mother. Among these I recall the poet Percival, who died in 1856 and was buried at Hazel Green. He was a frail, quiet, uncommunicative man of sixty, then geologist of the state. Really, I could name by the score the prominent men whom I met in early Wisconsin. General Grant, however, stands uppermost in my mind.